

October 1, 2011

Honorable Denise L. Cote
United States District Judge
Southern District of New York
500 Pearl Street
New York, New York 10007

Dear Honorable Denise L. Cote,

I am hurt. I am embarrassed. I am scared. I am Cheryl Skowron, Chip's wife.

I grew up in Southern California. My dad is from the projects in Port Chester, NY and my mom grew up in a poor but happy family in Harrison, NY. My dad eventually became a successful businessman in the airline industry. I went to college on a gymnastics scholarship, was a writer for an advertising agency and am now an at home mom.

Chip and I celebrate our 15th anniversary this month. We have four beautiful young children. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] And Rocky, our Golden Retriever, is 8 - loyal, loving and getting old fast.

So there's a family snapshot and now I need to tell you how wonderful my husband is, except I'm struggling with my disappointment in him over this circumstance. I'm trying to understand how he could risk so much. He says he had no idea prison was a possibility otherwise he never would've done it. I believe him and yet here we are. As a mom, this is not an easy one to forgive. But Chip is a good man. He always has been. And I love him. I'm sick with concern and sadness that my family may be without our rock. So deep breath, here's my husband in all honesty.

Chip's from a small town in Florida. His father was a small business owner and his mother was a teacher, she died in a car accident when he was 22. He's had nothing handed to him. He's successful because he's exceptionally smart and works extraordinarily hard. Chip is a self made man. I fell in love with him because he sees only the good in people. The world looks amazing through his eyes. Okay, he's also very handsome.

Chip has done far more for others than anyone I know. He's generous beyond measure with his time, his money, his intellect, his spirit, and his self. To know Chip is a fun and enriching gift.

He's a good husband.

Over 15 years we've had our share of ups and downs but we both have a strong commitment to our marriage and our children. For us, nothing is more important than our family. We're now in marriage counseling to help us support each other through this extraordinarily difficult time in our relationship. It's an honor and a pleasure to be Chip's wife.

He's a good father.

Soccer team dad, baseball team dad, at all dance recitals. Chip's always playing with or teaching the kids. Often found grilling burgers for their friends. Not always rosy, his business travel was hard on the kids, but he always made up for lost time. He makes the kids breakfast every morning (I love that one!).

He's a good family man.

After the recent death of my father, Chip's become the patriarch of our extended family. He's loved and respected by all. My dad was Chip's greatest fan. Were he still with us, his letter to you would've best portrayed Chip's sound moral fiber. Every weekend my husband invites family and friends over and cooks dinner for everyone. He organizes our family vacations. He brings people together. Family and friends spending time and supporting each other has always been his top priority.

He's a good Christian.

Our family goes to church every Sunday. Our children attend religion classes. We have our priests over for dinner. Chip has helped friends find their faith. Chip takes care of people; it's who he is. And through this struggle he has grown in his faith and is now more committed than ever to becoming a better Christian, a better husband, and a better father. He has handled his situation with humility, respect for all involved and admirable honesty.

He's a good friend.

Chip's given time, money, and effort to friends struggling with unemployment, sickness, struggles of any kind. People of all ages seek his advice about academics, medicine, finance, faith, you name it. He helps them understand and navigate life's important issues. One friend recently called him at 2am to come stay with their older kids, his wife was in labor. Another friend called when her elderly mother fell and broke her hip. She only wanted Chip because she knew he'd be respectful. He's mentored many students and graduates. He is generous beyond measure.

He's a good citizen.

Now there's an understatement. I'm sure friends have written about Chip's commitment to AmeriCares. It's been a long time sacrifice and opportunity for him. My father introduced Chip to AmeriCares in 1996. Since then, Chip has literally risked his life on numerous missions going into dangerous places because he knew he could make a difference. Chip has given his time, his money, his intellect and his heart to do good for those in need. And not just for AmeriCares but for people in his life every day.

He's a good opportunity.

I believe it's a disservice to society to not let Chip do his good. He's more capable, efficient and willing than anyone to help people. Put him to good use at least. He makes a difference in the world.

I've tried to fit a bigger than life man into a letter and it's impossible. I wish you could have just one conversation with Chip. He wears his heart on his sleeve so you'd quickly see his light. I understand his lapse in judgment is significant. He has accepted full responsibility and is desperately sorry. I'll forgive him; I'm working on it. Take it from me, aside from this one time mistake, Chip's character is rock solid.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

I have no idea how realistic it is to think our marriage can survive this, not knowing what prison would do to us. But I strive for a happy fulfilled family. Love is a decision and breaking up our marriage is not an option. We are a good family. And Chip is a good man. Even now. Especially now.

I am forgiving. I am hopeful. I am committed. I am Cheryl Skowron, Chip's wife.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cheryl Skowron". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

Cheryl Skowron